





SWEET SUCCESS

DIANE'S RESTAURANT & BAKERY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

by Christine Steele

Feeding people is what makes her happy, said Diane Barrett, of Diane's Restaurant and Bakery. It's something she's done for the Silver City community for 25 years. It's also in her genes.

"The food is in the blood," Diane said. "I'm from a food service family. My father had a restaurant. Bodhi's father had a restaurant. So, there's a lot of that in our background."

Humble Beginnings

On May 1, 1996, with the help of a \$5,000 micro loan from Westcorp (Women's Economic Self Sufficiency Team), and a lot of sweat equity from friends, Diane opened Diane's Bakery in what is now the kitchen of the main restaurant. It didn't stay just a bakery for long, though.

"Right away people wanted bread, and they wanted sandwiches out of the bread. Then they wanted soup to go with the sandwiches. So, pretty quickly I turned into a restaurant," Diane said.

Demand for catering services came soon after.

"The mines wanted me to make sandwiches," she continued. "They really helped me in the first couple of years with as much business as they gave me."

To help manage the growing business, Diane reached out to oldest son Bodhi, then 22 and a chef on Maui.

"Originally, I was just coming out here to help Mom get something going," Bodhi said.

He came with the idea of staying two years. That two has become 20-plus. "I had a lot of reasons to stay," Bodhi said.

Opportunity to Grow

"There were a lot of reasons to pitch in and help out," Bodhi said. "I was young and I had an opportunity to help Diane create her own restaurant. I'd only been in the restaurant business for five years. I had worked in some great restaurants and treated it like an apprenticeship. I would try to learn everything I could from a place and then move on and keep my education going. Then Mom had this opportunity, so I really had to come and help her out. Two years was nothing as far as I was concerned, you know, coming home and doing the right thing."

"So, we cut a hole in the wall, got a beer and wine license and went to three meals a day," Diane said. Thus, Diane's Restaurant was born.

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Food & Family

Over the years, it's been all about food and family.

"We are a family of cooks," Bodhi said. "Growing up out at our ranch, we didn't have TV or any entertainment, so when the sun went down, we were all in the kitchen. We all learned to cook. We all had to feed ourselves. There was no grocery store around the corner or McDonald's or anything like that. So, it made us a lot more aware of the food, of where it comes from, but also in being able to provide for ourselves and make a good meal."

When Bodhi decided to return, working with family was part of the draw.

"My father was alive then and living out there on our ranch on his own, so I came to the area to help him a little bit and to help my mom get this place going," he said. "She was also raising my brother Dan, who is 10 years younger than me, so he was a young teenager at that point and it was an influential time. He was just starting to help out, folding turnovers in the back room before school. My brother Ari was just coming out of high school. My sister Chala was involved for years. She was waiting tables and working the front of the house. I've worked with three of my siblings and that's definitely made it better over the years. The three brothers, we worked together for years. We were a pretty good team for a long time. For the most part, now it's just Mom and I."

While working with family can come with challenges, it has also helped them grow, they said.

"Temper can definitely flare when you have family and emotions involved," Bodhi said.

"Sometimes everything's an argument, but that can be good in business too," Diane said. "I couldn't have done it without Bodhi. We've got a really good partnership and friendship."

Sweet Rewards

Over the years, Diane's has grown and evolved. The bakery moved to its own space in The Hub across from the restaurant about 14 years ago. The Parlor opened up inside the restaurant, offering light, fryer-free pub fare, and live music and open mics several nights a week. Many special occasions are celebrated with a Diane's cake or toasted in the Parlor or restaurant.

"For the most part it's, it's really rewarding," Bodhi said. "I enjoy it for so many reasons, not just the family aspect."

The other ingredient to their success over the years, the pair say, is community. "We have to thank our customers," Bodhi said. "We would not be here at all if it weren't for them and establishing a little bit of a following," Bodhi said. "I think that that's really important in a small town."

In a big city, where people come and go all the time, all some restaurants have to do is put a pretty sign out to get people in the door, he explained.

"We feed the same people day after day. If we mess up, they're not going to want to come back. The only way that we can stay in business for this long is to have a good reputation and put out a good consistent product. We've kept our community happy for 25 years."

Future Plans

Diane's has won many awards over the years, including Best Brunch in the state for their Hatch Benedict, but perhaps the best barometer of their success is that they are still here 25 years later. While the doors on the restaurant and Parlor remain closed at this time, Diane's is not going away anytime soon.

"We aren't going away," Diane said. "We're definitely a restaurant. We're definitely a parlor, and we're definitely a bakery, but it's how to make that work. Since the pandemic, everything has shifted."

The bakery and deli have remained open throughout this COVID year, selling many menu items from the restaurant in takeout containers as part of their Good-to-Go selection in addition to Diane's delicious cakes, pies, breads, baked goods and sandwiches. But, everywhere she goes, people are asking her when Diane's will open for dine-in again.

"We're using this time to get a bunch of stuff going in the restaurant," she said. "Diane's Restaurant and Parlor will continue to exist and we look forward to welcoming everyone back to dine in when the time is right."

Diane Barrett and son Bodhi Werber display some of the fantastic food Diane's Restaurant and Bakery has become known for. Diane holds her famous Fruit Basket Cake and Bodhi has the Greek Platter, which features gyro meat, feta cheese, hummus, pita, red onion, black olives, and tzatziki on fresh greens.

Photo by Christine Steele

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